

Message Text

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TAGS: SHUM, CM, US

SUBJECT:HUMAN RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT - CAMEROON

REF: STATE 18330

1. FOLLOWING IS APPROVED TEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT
WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS JAN. 31. LOCAL OFFI-
CIALS SHOULD BE INFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTEL IN-
STRUCTIONS. REPORT TO BE DISCUSSED CAMEROONIAN AMBASSA-
DOR IN WASHINGTON. QUOTE: CAMEROON

CAMEROON HAS A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT OPERATING UNDER A
CONSTITUTION AND WITHIN A SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM.
ITS UNIQUE HISTORY HAS LED CAMEROON TO MAKE NATIONAL
UNITY A PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE. THREE EUROPEAN POWERS
GOVERNED CAMEROON -- GERMANY, BRITAIN AND FRANCE.
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FURTHERMORE, AN ETHNICALLY BASED AND IDEOLOGICALLY MOTI-
VATED GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN, BEGUN AGAINST THE FRENCH AND
CONTINUED AGAINST THE INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT, SEVERELY
TESTED THAT GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO FOSTER NATIONAL
UNITY. BY THE MID-SIXTIES, HOWEVER, THE CAMEROONIAN
GOVERNMENT HAD MANAGED TO ASSERT ITS CONTROL OVER THE
AREA IN CONFLICT. IN 1965, PRESIDENT AHIDJO ORGANIZED

THE CAMEROON NATIONAL UNION (CNU) AS THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE

POLITICAL PARTY, AN AMALGAMATION OF PREVIOUSLY EXISTING ETHNIC AND REGIONAL PARTIES. IN RECENT YEARS, AS THE THREAT OF INTERNAL SUBVERSION HAS RECEDED, POLITICAL DETAINEES HAVE BEEN RELEASED, AND RESTRICTIONS OF CIVIL LIBERTIES HAVE BEEN LARGELY REMOVED.

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

TORTURE IS PROHIBITED IN CAMEROON. THIS PROHIBITION APPEARS TO BE OBSERVED IN PRACTICE.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

INADEQUATE PRISON CONDITIONS RESULT FROM FINANCIAL WOES AND NOT FROM DELIBERATE POLICIES. IN MARCH 1977, CAMEROON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PARISHES ORGANIZED A FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN TO AID PRISONERS AND BRING THEIR PLIGHT TO PUBLIC ATTENTION. SINCE THEN, THE CAMEROONIAN GOVERNMENT HAS STEPPED UP ITS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING OF PRISON OFFICIALS, STRESSING THE NEED ALWAYS TO REGARD PRISONERS AS FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS.
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C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

IN 1976, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SELECTED CAMEROON AS ONE OF ITS PRIORITY COUNTRIES IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA AND IS CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING A NUMBER OF ALLEGED ARBITRARY ARRESTS. THE CAMEROON GOVERNMENT HAS SAID THAT ALL REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE RELEASED IN CONJUNCTION WITH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS ON MAY 20, 1977. AT THE PRESENT TIME, WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS BEING DETAINED ON POLITICAL CHARGES.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

DEFENDANTS ARE ALLOWED A FAIR, PUBLIC TRIAL.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

INVASION OF THE HOME DOES NOT OCCUR WITH GOVERNMENT SANCTION.

2. GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF

SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND
EDUCATION:

THE GOVERNMENT IS ACTIVELY SEEKING WAYS TO IMPROVE THE
LIVING STANDARDS OF THE NATION'S POOREST SEGMENTS. AT
LEAST HALF OF THE NEW FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN (1976-81)
DEALS WITH IMPROVING SOCIAL CONDITIONS. SPECIFICALLY,
THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO EXPAND THE EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH
FACILITIES FOR BOTH URBAN AND RURAL POPULATIONS; INCREASE
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IMPROVE NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL
SYSTEMS; PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING; AND INTEGRATE
YOUTH INTO THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. SOME OF THESE PRO-
GRAMS ARE ALREADY ENJOYING A FAIR DEGREE OF SUCCESS.

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PERHAPS CAMEROON'S MOST AMBITIOUS PLAN IS FOR THE CREA-
TION OF A SOUND INFRASTRUCTURAL BASE. THE GOVERNMENT
HAS UNDERTAKEN A PROJECT TO IMPROVE THE RAIL LINK BETWEEN
YAOUNDE AND DOUALA IN THE EXPECTATION THAT A MODERN AND
EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM WILL SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH
AND BENEFIT THE RURAL POPULATION AS HAS BEEN THE CASE
WITH REGARD TO THE RECENTLY COMPLETED RAIL LINE BETWEEN
YAOUNDE AND NGAOUNDERE. A PORT EXPANSION PROGRAM AT
DOUALA SHOULD BRING ABOUT SIMILAR RESULTS.

IN 1972, THE COUNTRY'S THREE LABOR FEDERATIONS WERE UNITED
TO FORM THE NATIONAL UNION OF CAMEROON WORKERS, AN AFFILI-
ATE OF THE CNU. LABOR UNIONS HAVE LITTLE POLITICAL OR
ECONOMIC STRENGTH BECAUSE OF THE SMALL SIZE OF THE SAL-
ARIED WORK FORCE AND GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER UNION ACTI-
VITIES. STRIKES ARE BANNED IN CAMEROON.

3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

IN FACT, CAMEROON IS CHARACTERIZED BY DIVERSE ETHNIC AND
RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS WHICH ARE NOT ONLY TOLERATED BUT
ENCOURAGED. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE PRESS IS CIRCUM-
SCRIBED WITHIN THE SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM. HOWEVER, THE
PRESS, WHILE SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT CONTROL, IS RELATIVELY
OUTSPOKEN AND IS OFTEN A SOURCE OF ADMITTED EMBARRASSMENT
TO GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION IS OBSERVED IN A NATION COMPRISED
OF ANIMISTS, CHRISTIANS, AND MOSLEMS. CHRISTIAN MISSION-
ARIES ARE FREE TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES THROUGHOUT THE
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COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE MOSLEM NORTH.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY FOR SOCIAL AND NON-POLITICAL PURPOSES IS GENERALLY UNRESTRICTED. POLITICAL MEETINGS, HOWEVER, ARE ORGANIZED AND CONTROLLED BY THE CAMEROON NATIONAL UNION (CNU), THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION

CAMEROONIANS MOVE FREELY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION ARE USUALLY UNRESTRICTED. EXIT VISAS ARE REQUIRED AND ARE SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN, DUE TO BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE. OCCASIONALLY, DELAYS HAVE RESULTED FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPTS TO PREVENT CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS FROM LEAVING THE COUNTRY.

C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

CAMEROON IS A ONE-PARTY STATE. THE GOVERNMENT DOES PERMIT A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION AND COMPETITION AMONG CANDIDATES VYING FOR LOCAL OR REGIONAL OFFICES. SUFFRAGE IS UNIVERSAL, AND ELECTIONS FOR SEATS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ARE REGULARLY SCHEDULED. ONLY THOSE CANDIDATES ENJOYING THE CNU IMPRIMATUR, HOWEVER, ARE ALLOWED TO HAVE THEIR NAMES ON THE BALLOT.

4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

IN THE PAST, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN QUITE WILLING TO ALLOW OUTSIDE INVESTIGATION INTO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WAS INVITED TO ATTEND A SERIES OF POLITICAL TRIALS IN 1971 AND THE RESULTING REPORT WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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RECEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

RECENTLY, HOWEVER, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CLAIMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS BEING LESS RESPONSIVE TO ITS SPECIFIC INQUIRIES. END QUOTE. VANCE

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